

VZCZCXRO4552
RR RUEHLMC
DE RUEHAM #7737/01 2831503
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 101503Z OCT 06
FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4764
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 007737

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/09/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KMCA](#) [KDEM](#) [KMPI](#) [KTFN](#) [EFIN](#) [JO](#)
SUBJECT: PRODUCTIVE EXTRAORDINARY SESSION OF PARLIAMENT
CONCLUDES

REF: A. REF A) AMMAN 6167
[¶](#)B. REF B) AMMAN 7420
[¶](#)C. REF C) AMMAN 6708
[¶](#)D. REF D) 04 AMMAN 7619
[¶](#)E. REF E) AMMAN 5945

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires a.i. Daniel Rubinstein for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d)

Summary: A Busy and Productive Session

[¶](#)1. (SBU) Summary: Jordan's Parliament concluded its extraordinary session September 28, six weeks after King Abdullah recalled the legislators and handed them an ambitious 42-bill agenda (ref A). A potential crisis over two imprisoned Islamist MPs was averted when the Islamic Action Front backed down from its threat to boycott parliament (ref B). By the time the session ended, the two houses of parliament had approved 23 of the government,s bills and rejected three, a very productive session by Jordanian standards. End Summary.

Much of Government,s Priority Legislation Passed. .

[¶](#)2. (SBU) Parliament approved several of the bills the government considered its top priorities: an anti-terrorism law (ref C), a new anti-corruption law and a financial disclosure law. Also passed were a pair of bills that codify existing government control over preaching in mosques and the promulgation of fatwas.

. . . But Not All

[¶](#)3. (SBU) However, other important bills did not make it all the way through the legislative process, and the government will have to make a renewed push for their passage when the next regular session of parliament begins November [¶](#)28. Bills in this category include reformed anti-money laundering legislation: the Legal Committee of the lower house approved it, but it did not reach the floor for action by the time the extraordinary session adjourned.

Political Parties and Municipal Government

[¶](#)4. (C) A similar fate befell the municipal government and political parties bills, both controversial because they will lay the groundwork for upcoming elections, against the backdrop of a sour popular mood which some in the establishment worry will accrue to the benefit of Islamist

candidates. Chamber of Deputies committees approved both the municipal government and the parties bills, but the full chamber did not take them up. The committees did not change the political parties bill, but did make a recommendation to amend the municipal government legislation. The government draft of the municipal bill would have returned Jordan to its traditional system, under which voters chose all mayors and municipal councilors, except in Amman, where the government has always appointed the mayor and half of the Council. The Administrative Committee amended the bill to apply the Amman model to all cities with more than 300,000 inhabitants. In practice, this means Amman, Irbid and Zarqa. Comment: Not coincidentally, local conventional wisdom is that these three cities are more likely than the rest of the country to elect Islamist and/or Palestinian-Jordanian candidates. End comment. Contacts in Parliament tell post the bill will pass in its amended form during the regular session of parliament.

Summary of Bills Passed/Rejected

15. (U) Bills passed during the session were as follows:

- a) Anti-Terrorism Law) Codified a number of long-standing practices of the security services, and strengthened Jordan's regime for fighting terrorist financing. (ref C)
- b) Budget Supplement for 2006 - Provided funds to continue fuel subsidies at higher-than-expected world crude prices, as well as supplemental funding for poverty alleviation, medical care and national security.
- c) Amended Bank Law
- d) Khutba Act) Re-codifies existing government controls

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- over who can preach, offer guidance or teach in mosques (ref D).
- e) Ifta' Act) Reinforces the authority of the Awqaf Ministry and other government bodies to regulate the issuance of fatwas.
 - f) Anti-Corruption Act) Established an anti-corruption commission that reports directly to the Prime Minister.
 - g) Nursing Law (two versions combined)
 - h) Children's Rights legislation
 - i) A bill chartering the government's Human Rights Center
 - j) Amendment to the penal code
 - K) Amendment to the military penal code
 - l) Amendment to the Weapons and Ammunition Law
 - m) Amendment to the Explosives Law
 - n) Amendment to anti-narcotics legislation) Eliminated capital punishment for some drug-related crimes.
 - o) Financial Disclosure Law) Required government and elected officials to disclose personal finances.
 - p) Amended Higher Education and Research Law
 - q) Amendment to the law on corporations
 - r) Environment Act) Codified a temporary law in effect since 2003 (septel).
 - s) Amended law for implementation of sharia law
 - t) Law for Rent or Sale of Non-Transferable Funds to non-Jordanians
 - u) Amended Law for Public Security
 - v) Naval Authority Law

16. (U) Bills Rejected by the Parliament were as follows:

- a) Amended Sales Tax Law
- b) Law for Rent or Sale of Non-Transferable Funds to non-Jordanians (merged into the version that was passed)
- c) Amended Naval Authority (Merged into the version that was passed)

Comment

17. (C) Comment: Most of the credit for the special session's productivity goes to Palace staff for their work in establishing an understanding among the country's establishment of the King's priorities, including at the July "Kulna al-Urdun" retreat for 700 politicians and opinion-shapers (ref E). Jordan's lead security service, the GID, likely also played behind the scenes its traditionally-important role of coordinating the government's undisciplined majority in the lower house. End Comment.

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